



FIFTH REGULAR SESSION

8-12 December 2008

Busan, Korea

**MARSHALL ISLANDS - STATEMENT ON ASPIRATIONS OF SMALL ISLAND
DEVELOPING STATES**

WCPFC5-2008/DP35

11 December 2008

STATEMENT BY HON. FREDERICK H. MULLER,
MINISTER OF RESOURCES & DEVELOPMENT
ON MARSHALL ISLANDS DRAFT PROPOSAL
“Aspirations of Small Island Developing States (SIDS)”
WCPFC5/2008/DP05

The draft proposal submitted by the Republic of the Marshall Islands (WCPFC5/2008/DP05) is a duly modified version thereby making it more enhanced and hopefully more acceptable to Members of what we initially proposed at last year’s meeting in Guam.

As members are aware, the Marshall Islands has been having recurring difficulty in our aspirations to further develop our domestic fishery through acquisition of fishing vessels to expand our domestic fleet. In the interest of time and without having to go into details, it is quite clear from our experience during the past 2 ½ years that notwithstanding the sovereign rights of Coastal States, in particular SIDS, to exploit, manage, and develop their fisheries within their EEZs, and the specific due process and protection of those sovereign rights explicitly enshrined in the Convention and further embodied in current existing CMMs and Resolutions, some developed Members tend to remain uncooperative or are not too forthcoming in their provision of fisheries development assistance to SIDS in the Pacific.

As one of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA), the Marshall Islands will continue to strongly advocate these inherent and non-negotiable rights as fundamental pillars that effectively secure and protect our development aspirations and interests. It must be clear that as Coastal States, SIDS in the region are allowed to provide some level of food

security for our people through optimum utilization as well as economic benefits from the range of highly migratory stocks that occur within our respective national jurisdictions and including but not limited to the high seas.

To this end, it is equally critical for the Commission to develop and implement compatible measures for areas beyond national jurisdiction of Coastal States, particularly SIDS, whose national waters account for a significant proportion of the catch harvested in the WCPO.

Mr. Chairman:

The draft proposal attempts to rectify any shortcomings that may have made it difficult for some developed Members to consider adopting at last year's meeting. More critically, it seeks to call once again for an orderly restructuring and reduction of Distant Water Fishing Nations (DWFNs) fleets operating in the Convention Area in order to accommodate the increasing interests and needs of SIDS to participate in maximizing economic benefits of the WCPO fishery. Only this time around, there exists a specific timeframe of 10 years for such innovative and cooperative restructuring which we feel as appropriate and sufficient for our aspirations to be fully acknowledged and ultimately fulfilled.

From our perspective, the draft proposal should be viewed with such optimism and even more positively in that we are essentially requesting cooperation and assistance from developed Members with whom we have had fruitful and mutual economic partnerships that have enabled most if not all of the SIDS in the Pacific to pursue more viable and long-term economic goals and associated benefits through domestic fisheries development as we find ourselves today.

Such level of fisheries development support is critical in our efforts to further enhance and complement current existing arrangements in the region. It is quite clear that the shifts in paradigms around the region are indicative of things to come in the near future, that is, the SIDS in the region are intent on further revamping and realigning the current existing arrangements to reflect the impending needs and immediate interests of their people in their pursuit of momentous and mutually beneficial economic partnerships as far as our fisheries are concerned.

The SIDS in the region receive less than five percent of the estimated \$3 billion in annual profits currently being realized by our developed fishing partners. We encourage

developed Members to work with us on strategies, which will assist us to improve our economic returns from the fisheries and associated industries. The global challenge for Coastal States, and in particular SIDS in the region, is the ability to achieve meaningful benefits from our own resources.

Mr. Chairman:

It is important that we all continue to uphold and acknowledge the long and rich history behind all of this to realize and appreciate the bigger picture as to how far we have come to where we are today at this 5th Regular Session and ultimately where we aspire to be tomorrow and hopefully long into the future.

Likewise, of crucial importance is the high priority that has been placed on the region's fisheries by the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders which I need not reiterate their concerns put forth through the Vava'u Declaration of 2007 and further emphasized by this year's Niue Declaration. In this regard, the Marshall Islands, like the other SIDS in the Pacific, recognizes the importance of fisheries to our livelihood and economy which, while not of comparable scale to others, nevertheless thrives on the current level of existing on-shore fishery development for which we aspire to further develop. To this end, there has been increasing level of interests and needs related to promotion of domestic fisheries, in particular the development of national tuna industries in the context of a phased introduction of rights based management arrangements.

Mr. Chairman:

In keeping with the overall spirit of optimism and significance that Busan has come to symbolize for all of us here thus far, I wish to end my statement on an even positive note by formally extending to the developed Members who are our fishing partners around the table here today to give some serious thoughts and considerations to our invitation for cooperation. On that note, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge representatives from the Marshall Islands domestic fishing industry as well as those of other Pacific Island countries represented in and around the table who comprise a strong contingent of our delegations and without whom our development aspirations and visions will not be as viable and robust as they are today and hopefully down the line long into the future for generations to come.